

Electric and Natural Gas Service Disconnection Residential Customers

Taken from CONSUMER STANDARDS AND BILLING PRACTICES
FOR ELECTRIC AND GAS RESIDENTIAL SERVICE
R 460.2101 - R 460.2199:

PART 8. PROCEDURES FOR SHUTOFF AND RESTORATION OF SERVICE

R 460.136 Emergency shutoff.

Rule 36. Notwithstanding any other provision of these rules, a utility may shut off service temporarily for reasons of health or safety or in a state or national emergency. When a utility shuts off service for reasons of health or safety, the utility shall leave a notice at the premises in accordance with the provisions of R 460.139(a), (b), and (i).

History: 2007 MR 20, Eff. Oct. 26, 2007.

R 460.137 Shutoff permitted.

Rule 37. Subject to the requirements of these rules, a utility may shut off or terminate service to a residential customer for any of the following reasons:

(a) The customer has not paid a delinquent account that accrued within the last 6 years.

(b) The customer has failed to provide a deposit or guarantee permitted by these rules.

(c) The customer has engaged in unauthorized use of utility service.

(d) The customer has failed to comply with the terms and conditions of a settlement agreement.

(e) The customer has refused to arrange access at reasonable times for the purpose of inspection, meter reading, maintenance, or replacement of equipment that is installed upon the premises, or for the removal of a meter.

(f) The customer misrepresented his or her identity for the purpose of obtaining utility service or put service in another person's name without permission of the other person.

(g) The customer has violated any rules of the utility approved by the commission so as to adversely affect the safety of the customer or other persons or the integrity of the utility system.

(h) A person living in the customer's residence is both of the following:

(i) Has a delinquent account for service with the utility within the past 3 years that remains unpaid and is not in dispute.

(ii) The customer lived in the person's residence when all or part of the debt was incurred. The utility may transfer a prorated amount of the debt to the customer's account, based upon the length of time that the customer resided at the person's residence. This provision does not apply if the customer was a minor while living in the person's residence.

History: 2007 MR 20, Eff. Oct. 26, 2007.

R 460.138 Notice of shutoff.

Rule 38. (1) A utility shall not shut off service pursuant to the

provisions of R 460.141 or R 460.142 unless it sends a notice to the customer by first-class mail or personally serves the notice not less than 10 days before the date of the proposed shut off. The utility shall send notice to the account name and address and to the address where service is provided if the service address is different and the notice can be delivered at that address. A utility shall maintain a record of the date the notice was sent.

(2) A utility shall permit a customer to designate a consenting individual or agency to receive a copy of a notice of shutoff.

(3) Not less than 30 days before the proposed shutoff of service to a single-metered dwelling that is used as a residence for 3 or more separate households, a utility shall transmit a notice to each dwelling unit that indicates that the customer of record, the landlord, has failed to pay an outstanding bill and is subject to shutoff of service on or after a specified date.

History: 2007 MR 20, Eff. Oct. 26, 2007.

R 460.139 Form of notice.

Rule 39. A notice of shutoff of service shall contain all of the following information:

(a) The name and address of the customer, and the address at which service is provided, if different.

(b) A clear and concise statement of the reason for the proposed shutoff of service.

(c) The date on or after which the utility may shut off service, unless the customer takes appropriate action.

(d) That the customer has the right to enter into a settlement agreement with the utility if the claim is for an amount that is not in dispute and the customer is presently unable to pay in full.

(e) That the customer has the right to file a complaint disputing the claim of the utility before the proposed date of the shutoff of service.

(f) That the customer has the right to request a hearing before a hearing officer if the customer disputes the reasonableness of the settlement agreement offered by the utility or if the complaint cannot be otherwise resolved and that the customer must pay to the utility that portion of the bill that is not in dispute within 10 business days of the date that the customer requests a hearing.

(g) That the customer has the right to represent himself or herself, to be represented by counsel, or to be assisted by other persons of his or her choice in the complaint process.

(h) That the utility will not shut off service pending the resolution of a complaint that is filed with the utility or the commission in accordance with these rules.

(i) The telephone number and address of the utility where the customer may make inquiry, enter into a settlement agreement, or file a complaint.

(j) That the customer should contact a social services agency immediately if the customer believes he or she might be eligible for an energy assistance program or other emergency economic assistance and should inform the utility of any efforts being made to obtain payment assistance.

(k) That customers who believe they may be eligible for assistance from an energy assistance program should determine if assistance is available before signing a settlement agreement because many agencies will not provide assistance if shutoff is avoided by signing a settlement agreement.

(l) That the utility will postpone the shutoff of service if a certified medical emergency exists at the customer's residence or the customer is an

eligible low-income customer who is actively seeking emergency assistance from an energy assistance program.

(m) That the utility may require a deposit and restoration charge if the utility shuts off service for nonpayment of a delinquent account or for unauthorized use of utility service.

(n) That the customer should contact the utility for information about a shutoff protection program.

History: 2007 MR 20, Eff. Oct. 26, 2007.

R 460.140 Time of shutoff.

Rule 40. (1) Subject to the requirements of these rules, a utility may shut off service to a customer on the date specified in the notice of shutoff or at a reasonable time following that date. If a utility does not shut off service and mails a subsequent notice, then the utility shall not shut off service before the date specified in the subsequent notice. Shutoff shall occur only between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

(2) A utility shall not shut off service on a day, or a day immediately preceding a day, when the services of the utility are not available to the general public for the purpose of restoring service and shall not shut off service on a Friday during the space heating season to a customer who has defaulted on a shutoff protection program under Part 9 of these rules.

History: 2007 MR 20, Eff. Oct. 26, 2007.

R 460.141 Manner of shutoff.

Rule 41. (1) For an involuntary shutoff, at least 1 day before shutoff of service, the utility shall make not less than 2 attempts to contact the customer by telephone, if a telephone number is available to the utility, to advise the customer of the shutoff and what steps the customer must take to avoid shutoff. If the utility uses an automated notification system, it shall document the process for ensuring that at least 2 attempts are made to notify the customer of the pending shutoff. If the telephone number is not available, the customer has no telephone, or the telephone contacts are not made, the utility shall either leave a notice at the premises advising the customer that service will be shutoff on or after the next business day or send notice by first-class mail postmarked at least 5 business days before shutoff of service is scheduled. The utility shall document all attempts to contact the customer.

(2) Immediately preceding the shutoff of service, an employee of the utility who is designated to perform that function may identify himself or herself to the customer or another responsible person at the premises and may announce the purpose of his or her presence.

(3) The employee shall have in his or her possession a copy of the delinquent account of the customer and request any available verification that the outstanding claims have been satisfied or are currently in dispute. Unless the customer presents evidence that reasonably indicates that the claim has been satisfied or is currently in dispute, the employee may shut off service.

(4) The employee may be authorized to accept payment and shall not shut off service if the customer offers payment in full, together with a commission-approved collection charge for sending the employee to the premises, if provided in the utility's schedule of rates and tariffs.

(5) The customer may pay in any reasonable manner, including by personal

check or by credit or debit card. Payment by personal check, credit or debit card is not reasonable if the customer has paid with a personal check, credit or debit card within the last 12 months and at least 1 check has been returned for insufficient funds or no account, or at least 1 credit or debit card payment has been denied excluding financial institution error.

(6) After notice has been provided in accordance with subrule (1) of this rule, and if the customer does not respond, the employee may shut off service.

(7) When the utility employee shuts off service, the employee shall leave a notice in a conspicuous place upon the premises. For all forms printed after the effective date of these rules, the notice shall state that service has been shut off, the address and telephone number of the utility where the customer may arrange to have service restored, and that any efforts by the customer to restore his or her own service are unlawful and dangerous.

History: 2007 MR 20, Eff. Oct. 26, 2007.

R 460.142 Manner of shutoff for service provided with remote shutoff and restoration capability.

Rule 42. (1) For an involuntary shutoff, at least 1 day before shutoff of service, the utility shall make at least 2 attempts to contact the customer by telephone, if a telephone number is available to the utility, to advise the customer of the pending shutoff and what steps the customer must take to avoid shutoff. If the utility uses an automated notification system, it shall document the process for ensuring that at least 2 attempts are made to notify the customer of the pending shutoff. If the telephone number is not available, the customer has no telephone, or the telephone contacts are not made, the utility shall either leave a notice at the premises advising the customer that service will be shutoff on or after the next business day or send notice by first-class mail postmarked at least 5 business days before shutoff of service is scheduled. The notice shall conspicuously state that the disconnection of service will be done remotely and that a utility representative will not return to the premises before disconnection. The utility shall document all attempts to contact the customer.

(2) If the utility contacts the customer or other responsible person in the customer's household by telephone on the day service is to be shutoff, the utility shall inform the customer or other responsible person that shutoff of service is imminent and the steps necessary to avoid shutoff. Unless the customer presents evidence that reasonably demonstrates that the claim is satisfied or is in dispute, or the customer makes payment, the employee may shutoff service.

(3) If the utility mailed the notice of shutoff to the customer as provided in subrule (1) of this rule, and if telephone contact with the customer cannot be made or if the customer did not respond to the notice provided in accordance with subrule (1) of this rule, no further customer contact is required on the day service is to be shutoff and the utility may shutoff service.

History: 2007 MR 20, Eff. Oct. 26, 2007.

R 460.143 Shutoff prohibited.

Rule 43. A utility shall not shut off service for any of the following reasons:

(a) The customer has not paid for items, such as merchandise, appliances, or services that are not approved by the commission as an integral part of

the utility service that is provided by the utility.

(b) The customer has not paid for concurrent service received at a separate metering point, residence, or location.

(c) The customer has not paid for a different class of service received at the same or a different location. The placing of more than 1 meter at the same location for the purpose of billing the usage of specific residential energy-using devices under optional rate schedules or provisions is not a different class of service for the purposes of this rule.

(d) The customer, such as a landlord, has not paid for service used by another person, such as a tenant. A utility may shutoff service, however, in any of the following circumstances where proper notice has been given:

(i) If the customer supplies a written, notarized statement that the premises are unoccupied.

(ii) If the premises are occupied and the occupant agrees, in writing, to the shutoff of service.

(iii) If it is not feasible to provide service to the occupant as a customer without a major revision of existing distribution facilities. Where it is feasible to provide service, the utility shall offer the occupant the opportunity to subscribe for service in his or her own name. If the occupant refuses, the utility may shut off service pursuant to these rules.

(e) A customer, the spouse of a customer or a customer with a spouse who is called to full-time active military service by the president of the United States or the governor of Michigan during a time of declared national or state emergency or war, except as otherwise provided in R 460.150.

History: 2007 MR 20, Eff. Oct. 26, 2007.

R 460.144 Restoration of service.

Rule 44. (1) After a utility has shut off service, it shall restore service promptly upon the customer's request when the cause has been cured or credit arrangements satisfactory to the utility have been made.

(2) When a utility is required to restore service at the customer's meter manually, the utility shall make every effort to restore service on the day the customer requests restoration. Except for reasons beyond its control, the utility shall restore service not later than the first working day after the customer's request.

(3) For utilities using meter technology with remote shutoff and restoration capability, service shall be restored on the day the customer requests restoration, except in the case of documented equipment failure.

(4) The utility may assess the customer a charge, including reasonable costs, for restoring service and relocating the customer's meter as specified in the utility's approved schedule of rates and tariffs.

History: 2007 MR 20, Eff. Oct. 26, 2007.